

ALL OUT OF PATIENCE

□ 1700

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I must say, in my religion we are in the season of Advent, and on one of these Advent Sundays, we light a patience candle. I fear that patience candle may not even do it for me this year. I have totally lost patience with the extremism of the New Republican freshmen. They appear to have the Speaker on a very short leash. But I am here today, joining the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. JOE KENNEDY, and others, in signing a letter to both Senator DOLE and to our Speaker asking for a Christmas trust in this budget war. Can we please have a Christmas trust for the 3.3 million veterans who went wherever they were sent, whether it was whatever holiday, whatever family situation, they went where they were sent. And I do not think they are going to appreciate figuring out tomorrow morning that if we have not done this Christmas trust for at least those 3.3 million, they are not going to get their checks on time on December 29. That is outrageous. That is why I have no patience.

Everybody knows today is the busiest mail day. People are using the mails to get through their holiday packages. So these checks have got to be in the mail tomorrow if they are going to be timely. And you cannot write checks if you do not have anybody there to be there and put them in.

Now, let me say, in hot wars we have insisted on trusts over Christmas. Why in the world in this budget war can we not get the Republican leadership down here and at least get our veterans out of the crossfire in this stupid little budget tantrum that some of the new Members are having?

I guess I just do not understand who is leading whom. But I think we really look pathetic. Here it is, 5 o'clock in the afternoon, we have not really done anything since 2 o'clock except yap, yap, yap, yap. Yesterday they named post offices. We have not done anything of substance. We discussed some budget that the President had like 9 months ago that was like a dead dog. Nobody has talked about it since, he has moved way beyond. He has agreed to the 7-year balancing of the budget.

I must say, here is a group of people who cannot even get this year's budget done. Hey, we are three Mondays into the fiscal year, and they cannot get this budget done. Seventy-five percent of the domestic spending has not been done, 25 percent of the way through this year. And what are they arguing about? They are arguing about projections 7 years out. Imagine, any American refusing to pay their bills this year because they have not put their budget together because they do not like the budget projections 7 years out? It will not work, America. It will not work.

And yet somehow people here are caving and allowing it to work on the other side of the aisle.

They have no credibility. If we cannot get this year's budget together, how do we ever anticipate getting to the next 6 years? So I really hope that very soon we can get through to the Republican leadership, that they answer the letter so many of us signed, that we see a Christmas truce, and we at least get our veterans out of the crossfire.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentlewoman that it is my information that within a short period of time, supposedly, the Committee on Rules is supposed to meet and bring forward a continuing resolution just for those people, that they can go to work in order to get those checks out for the veterans.

That is great, but that bothers me.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I agree. The gentleman is absolutely right. We still have students. We have 60,000 students who have theirs to be processed. We can list all those others.

Mr. VOLKMER. Homeowners, trying to get loans from HUD, and everything else. All that will not be done.

What it does is, it tells me that they want to be very political. The majority of the Republicans are very political. They do not want the veterans mad at them, but they do not care about the rest of the people and the Federal workers and everything.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I do not know about the gentleman's veterans, but the veterans in my area did not come to town on a turnip truck. They realized that had a lot of us not signed that letter to them, and pointed out that these veterans were being held hostage and we should at least have a Christmas truce, they would not be going to the Committee on Rules right now. My veterans have figured that out. They are not dumb.

Mr. VOLKMER. If the gentlewoman would further yield, why do we not have a Christmas truce for all the Federal Government?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I certainly agree. And I think we should have a Christmas truce for students. They did not cause this. They are totally innocent. They could not even vote in these last elections, and we could go on and on. But especially veterans.

The fact they were going to roll right over them, until a lot of us made some noise, is absolutely unbelievable. As I say, I think all of our patience has been tried. Let us hope they hurry up and get this down here, and I thank the gentleman for his comments.

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentlewoman for her leadership in this effort.

LET US NOT MAKE THE POOR THE SCAPEGOATS IN BALANCING THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. POSHARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to come to the floor in this special order here. And let me say before I begin any of my remarks that I would consider myself to be a fairly moderate to conservative member of my caucus, as a Democrat.

Mr. Speaker, I have been reading the welfare reform conference report this afternoon, and I wanted to just make a few remarks on it, because I have some concerns about it, frankly, and I wanted to express those concerns to the body.

I favor welfare reform. I know that we have to do certain things to make sure that people exercise their self-responsibility in our society and that Government cannot be the keeper of everyone. I was reading this afternoon, however, and I could not help but think of a time when I was in the State Senate back in Illinois, several years ago, and we were going through a proposal then that I believe the Governor had initiated to cut back on some of the benefits to some of the neediest in our State.

I remember there was a little lady, a nun in the church, who brought a bus load of folks down to Springfield. And they came into our committee room, and we were considering, I believe at that time perhaps the override of this initiative that was going to cut back funds for these folks. These were all folks that lived in a rundown part of Chicago. They were ragtag. They did not have good clothes. They did not seem to be very clean. Some of them were pretty smelly.

They came into our room, and the little nun who ran the program had some of them come up and testify before our committee about how important it was just to have the extra \$10 or \$12 or \$15 a month to help them survive.

We were all sitting there listening to this, and I think pretty moved by some of the stories that these folks who lived on skid row were telling us. And I remember very specifically there was this one little guy that came up to the testimonial table and began to speak to our committee. He told us about how difficult it was to get through the winter and how he really did not have a place to stay, and he said those few extra bucks that we were taking away from them meant a lot to him. He said, "I like to get a pack of cigarettes every now and then."

The minute he said that, all the air just went out of the committee room. We were all just kind of sitting there waiting on somebody to validate every prejudice we had in our heart against poor people, and he did it for us. He said the wrong thing. I could just feel the tension begin to rise again in the

room and members of the committee sitting there and saying, yeah, well, we told you so. Those welfare cheats. That is all they want the money for is so they can buy cigarettes.

I wrote all that down, I remember specifically, because I thought it was such a tragedy. I do not want us to make the same mistake out here in our welfare reform package. The poor among us are really important. They do not have a lot and they only take up a very small part of our budget. If we look at the whole budget, and we consider Medicaid and housing and food stamps and family support, and those sorts of things, it takes up a very small part of our budget. Yet somehow in this country we want to make the poor the scapegoats for all the problems that we are having here with respect to balancing our budget. Let us not do that, please.

I recall a very important scripture where it said in the end time we will all come before the judgment and the Lord will say, "Enter my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things; I am going to make you master over many." And we will say, "Well, when did I do that?" And it says that He will say, "Well, when you did it unto the least of these, My brother, you did it unto Me. When I was hungry, you gave Me food. When I was without clothes, you clothed Me. When I was thirsty, you gave Me drink. When I was in prison, you visited Me."

That is what is important, too. We should not, any of us here, just because we need to crunch numbers, or because we need to satisfy ourselves that the poor are the cause of our troubles, forget that we have a responsibility to be our brother's keeper.

DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS SHOULD REFLECT REALITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. COBLE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I will say to my friend from Illinois, before he leaves the floor, he is one of the most gentle, one of the kindest persons on this floor. And oftentimes when a Member comes to the mike on the floor, Mr. Speaker, it is an advantage to follow someone who is not very popular and who is a scoundrel. I have the unlucky draw today to follow the most gentle Member of the House, but I do that nonetheless.

Mr. Speaker, I did not plan to speak today. As the Speaker knows, I have been in the Chair for the past 3 hours and I have had the benefit of listening to discussions on both sides of the aisle.

My friend from Missouri, Mr. VOLKMER, says what a benefit, and it has been beneficial. Not surprisingly, both sides are subjective, as I am. I am guilty of that. But I want to try to add some balance to this in my brief 5 minutes.

One of my friends who sits here to my left now conveniently remembered some of the bad fiscal times under President Reagan. But as was mentioned subsequent to his speech, he conveniently forgot about the fiscal chaos that occurred in the Carter years. Well, this is only natural, I think. I think it is convenient for Democrats to remember the bad for Republicans, and the Republicans to remember the bad for the Democrats. That is only natural, and that is part of the nature of the beast, but I think when we do it so consistently then we are seeking out a balance that we need to retrieve and bring it back into the realm of discussion.

When I was last home, Mr. Speaker, a woman came to me, one of my constituents, and she said answer a question for me. She said, as best I remember the last time the Government was shut down, prior to this last time, she said it was in 1991. And I think it was, indeed, in 1991. And she said to me, the spin from the media then was that President Bush shut down the Government. And she said, even I blamed him. But she said, now, virtually no one from the media is pointing an accusatory finger to the President. They are saying NEWT GINGRICH or the majority Republican Congress has shut it down.

I am wondering, and I do not want to sound paranoid, Mr. Speaker, but I am wondering, is it convenient to blame a President when he happens to be a Republican and to exonerate a Congress when it happens to be controlled by the Democrats? I am afraid that is the spin that we are taking. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Many people today have blamed the Congress for veterans not receiving their checks, if they, in fact, do not receive their checks. President Clinton had every opportunity to sign the appropriations bill into law this week and those checks would have been forthcoming. I cannot for the life of me figure why that would be the fault of the Congress.

Am I missing something, America? As my friend from Ohio says: Wake up, Congress.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COBLE. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask the gentleman that very question, if I had missed something.

Correct me if I am wrong, is it not true that the President vetoed three appropriations bills, and that had he signed them, the Government would be up and running again today, right now?

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I know of two. It may well be three. Two comes to my mind. Is it three?

Mr. HOKE. The third was vetoed.

Mr. COBLE. So it is three. So my friends and the viewers who are watching C-SPAN now, let us come back into reality here and let us add balance to this discussion.

Mr. Speaker, as is obvious, I am not prepared, because I am doing this im-

promptu, but I am grateful for having had this time and I yield back the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITE). Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to the President or the viewing audience.

PRESIDENT SAYS IT IS POSSIBLE TO BALANCE BUDGET BY 2002 AND MEET GOP GOAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I saw this morning in the Baltimore Sun this report, and it was so stunning to me that I just have to read part of it to you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be sure not to offend the gentleman from Texas, and I want to make it clear that I am addressing my remarks to you, Mr. Speaker.

In the paper it says, "In a positive signal, Clinton told reporters before the meeting", this is before yesterday's meeting with Speaker GINGRICH and with Majority Leader DOLE, says "In a positive signal, Clinton told reporters before the meeting that he now thinks it is possible to reach the GOP goal of a balanced budget by 2002 using the conservative economic calculations by CBO."

Let me read that again, Mr. Speaker. It says, "In a positive signal, Clinton told reporters before the meeting that he now thinks it is possible to reach the GOP goal of a balanced budget by 2002 using the conservative economic calculations by CBO." He said this yesterday. At that point, it had been 29 days since he had personally signed his name to a piece of legislation known as a continuing resolution that included the language that said that he agreed to work with the Congress to achieve a CBO-scored balanced budget by 2002 and that he would do this before the end of this term.

Now, here he told reporters yesterday that now he thinks it is possible to reach that goal using CBO numbers. What is going on? Did he not read the legislation that he himself had signed?

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Was the President not aware of what he had signed? Did the President not read that paragraph in the continuing resolution that said that he was agreeing to actually come forward with a CBO-scored balanced budget by the year 2002? Did he not read it? Does not he read the legislation he signs?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand this. Here he acts with complete surprise that now he is saying that gosh, he thinks it is possible to reach that